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ABSTRACT

This document addresses an environmental scan done in the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). The goals of an environmental scan include collecting external information, predicting future trends, and analyzing how these trends might affect an organization. The environmental scan completed for the CCCS focused on emerging trends that may affect the school system in the next five years in the following categories: demographic, economic, and political. The study concludes that the CCCS provides a variety of services to a diverse population and must prepare itself for an increase in the number of students attending community colleges in the future. The document makes many recommendations based on the environmental scan results including the following: (1) CCCS should market itself to low-income and Hispanic students; (2) offer courses in basic and advanced skills; (3) create programs targeting transfer students; (4) partner with high schools to attract students of all abilities; (5) examine students services; (6) distribute information about services that are offered to both current and prospective students; and (7) continue to support in-state tuition for children of undocumented immigrants. The authors conclude that CCCS should always remember the population that they serve and make decisions in the best interests of the students. (Contains 57 references.) (MZ)

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Environmental Scan
for the
Colorado Community College System

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The following report was prepared for the CCCS Policy, Planning and Research department. It served as Vicky Ferguson's capstone project at UCD's Graduate School of Public Affairs and was originally completed in May 2003. Since then, additional articles and reports have been published that further support the data.

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Project Overview

The community college fills a unique niche in American higher education. Community colleges are close to the people, offering urban, suburban and rural locations; understand the needs of the students and businesses in their service areas and can adapt accordingly; offer flexibility, serving full-time and part-time, matriculated and non-matriculated, and daytime, evening and weekend students; are experienced in serving adults, including senior citizens, minorities, educationally and economically disadvantaged and under-prepared students; and are affordable.[1] With a policy of open-access and a wide array of offerings, community colleges truly have something for everyone.

The Colorado Community College System (CCCS) is governed by the nine-member State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE). The system has governance responsibility for 13 state community colleges. Additionally, the SBCCOE exercises some regulatory authority over two local district community colleges, four area vocational schools, and career and technical programs in over 150 school districts throughout the state.[2] As the administrative office of the SBCCOE, which has a broad range of responsibility, CCCS is able to serve a diverse population, with diverse needs, throughout the state.

Environmental scanning is the process of collecting external information, discerning potential future trends and analyzing how those trends may affect an organization. It is an important step in the strategic planning process, providing a context in which an organization can examine its values, vision, mission and goals. Environmental scanning helps to clarify issues as they relate to external stakeholders. It may be as simple as reading various newspapers and journals with no specific intent for the information. Alternatively, it may be structured to use formal methodologies for obtaining data with a specific purpose for that information. The scanning

performed for this project was what Aguilar identified as conditioned viewing. This method collects information and determines its relevance to an organization.

The environmental scan conducted for CCCS focuses on emerging trends that may affect the System's schools within the next five years. The scope of the scan was broad, focusing on more than just educational issues. Other topics, such as Homeland Security and the economy are also discussed. The prominent trends fall into three categories: demographic, economic, and political. Within each of these areas, various issues are highlighted to illuminate the potential effects for CCCS and its colleges.

Demographically, the student body will still consist of its traditional members: low-income students who appreciate the low-cost alternative to a quality higher education, 18 – 22 year olds who also wish to save money and to stay close to home for the first 2 years of their education, Hispanic students who enjoy the flexibility of scheduling offered by community colleges, which allows them to fulfill their family obligations, and adult students looking to update their skills or learn a new trade. Additionally, the largest-ever class of high school graduates will look to attend college in the fall of 2009. CCCS will need to prepare for changes in the demographics of its student body, and will need to consider how to better serve these students.

This need to satisfy the customer – the students – is directly affected by economic and political trends. The current recession is an economic trend with implications that will have a ripple effect for years to come influencing college funding, financial aid, and enrollment. Competition and collaboration with other institutions should be examined to determine the best options for CCCS, as should collaboration with the business sector. Political trends that will affect CCCS include more federal influence, a move toward academic courses as opposed to career and technical education and insistence on higher levels of accountability.

To conduct the scan, national newspapers and education journals were reviewed and recurring topics or trends were observed. Most of the research was done online, through education websites or subscriptions to online distribution lists. The scan was a creative exercise to recognize issues and evaluate how they may affect the colleges and the system at large. The goal of the scan was to provide information to the CCCS Policy, Planning and Research office on ways to plan for future issues and trends through their strategic planning process. Examining the trends that will affect its system will enable CCCS to prepare for change rather than simply react to it.

The Demographic Elements

The primary focus of any school should be its student body. As the customers, the students determine the success of an institution. It is the importance of the student body that requires this report to first look at the changing nature of that population. CCCS serves a vast array of students. Those that will have a significant impact in the coming years are high school graduates, known as the millennials, low-income students, Hispanic and undocumented students, and adults students, either desiring to further their education or gain new skills. (See *Economic Factors* section for more on adult students and the economy.) If a school is customer-focused, the makeup of the student body will determine policies and programs for the institution. Therefore, CCCS should consider the implications of serving each of these populations.

The Millennials

The population of students currently graduating from high school is the largest since the baby boom, which includes those born between 1943 and 1960. This new generation is often referred to as the "echo-boom" or the "millennials" and includes those born since 1982. "The baby boomlet peaked in 1990, when 4.2 million babies were born."[3] Projections from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education suggest that 3.2 million students will graduate high school in 2009, making them the largest graduating class in the history of the country.[4]

As this generation graduates from high school, post-secondary education must prepare for its arrival. For community colleges, as for other schools, this will mean an increase in enrollment. "The federal government projects public and private college enrollments will increase a total of

13% from now until 2012, adding 2.1 million students to the 15.6 million enrolled in the fall of 2002."[5] A concurrent trend is the continuation of our struggling economy. With higher unemployment, community colleges will see an influx of adult students wishing to improve their skills to obtain a job. With rising demand and fewer resources, colleges will have to do more with less. (See *Economic Factors* section below.)

Unlike community colleges, which have a policy of open access, other schools have the ability to cap enrollment and limit admissions. If these schools do not plan to expand their current capacity, larger enrollments in community colleges will occur. With a tradition of open enrollments and accessibility, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for community colleges to limit their admissions.

At the University of Tennessee, John Shumaker, president of the flagship Knoxville campus, stated his school would position itself to accept the "best and brightest." The state will rely on the community college system to provide the point of access for a greater number of students who are not accepted at the university.[6] The students would then be able to transfer once they have acquired the necessary skills and experiences. The University of California, while not explicitly heightening admissions requirements, reported that academic qualifications improved throughout its eight undergraduate campuses for the fall 2003 freshman class.[7] In Colorado, an example of restricting admissions can be seen at Colorado State University, which decided to tighten admission criteria due to the budget crisis.[8]

While one role of community colleges has been to provide basic skills education for those students who are not prepared for a more challenging post-secondary experience, they also serve high school graduates who wish to save money and stay close to home for the first two years of their higher education. As four-year schools are able to limit admissions, a larger pool

of applicants will increase competition, allowing them to raise admissions standards. This means that a student who may have easily been accepted previously may now find it difficult to find a four-year school to attend. This will direct a larger number of highly prepared students to community colleges, where they will seek to acquire the classes necessary to transfer to four-year institutions. Also, students experiencing economic difficulties may look to community colleges as a low-cost first step to a degree. This will also require advanced courses that prepare students for a four-year school.

When looking at program offerings over the next several years, colleges must consider what courses the millennials will desire. "Demographically, this is America's most racially and ethnically diverse, and least-Caucasian, generation. In 1999, nonwhites and Hispanics accounted for nearly 36% of the 18-or-under population."[9] Also, millennials have grown up in a globalized society. Their access to technology, the Internet and international media makes them more aware of the world around them. They are very savvy consumers, with more experience in the marketplace than previous generations. Schools will have to be prepared to market themselves as consumer-oriented, technologically advanced, racially diverse institutions to attract and retain millennial students.

6TH GRADE OFFICERS
CLASS PRESIDENT - PEDRO
INTERN - NATASHA
SPECIAL PROSECUTOR - XIU XIU
HOUSE MANAGERS - ZACH, MAX, CALVIN
TALK SHOW HOST - MADISON
CLASS POLLSTER - LATEESHA
SPINMEISTER - AHMAD
Cartoon by R.J. Matson from Millennials Rising

Howe and Strauss argue that the millennials have a greater sense of community than Generation-X did.[10] This can be attributed to higher rates of participation in group-sports, such as soccer, and more community involvement. If this is true, then millennials will expect a cohesive community at the college they attend. By providing this type of atmosphere, a school can make students feel comfortable in their environment and therefore be more likely to finish

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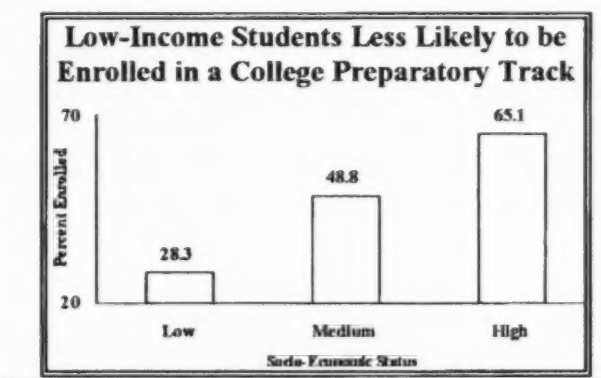
their program at that school.

Finally, while planning for the millennials' arrival, it is important to recognize that the number of high school graduates will not continue to grow. The largest class will graduate in 2009. Any adjustments made for the millennials must be short-term in nature and able to be scaled back without lost resources as demand declines.

Low Income students

First generation college students or those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds tend to enroll in community colleges.[11] They are attracted by flexible schedules and lower tuition rates. Low-income students face unique barriers to obtaining an education. These include a lack of role models to promote higher education, a lack of preparation in secondary schools, and a lack of knowledge about higher education in general and the resources and services available in particular.



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Second Follow-Up, 1992 in: *A Profile of the American High School Senior in 1992* (p. 36) Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education, June 1995.

One approach to easing the transition from secondary to post-secondary education is collaborating with high schools. CCCS colleges already have programs in place that allow high school students to take courses at the college while earning credit towards both high school and college degrees. In the recent survey of New York City schools, 12 of the 50 schools deemed successful are on campuses of the City University of New York.[12] While some of these schools are specifically for high performing students, more than half accept a cross-section of students and push them all to achieve at high

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levels. Bringing students to a college campus can be motivational. This could also be a way to break the barrier for low-income students. Stepping onto a college campus for the first time can be very intimidating. By having students attend classes, these fears can be eased and an expectation of earning a degree can be created.

If establishing wide-reaching partnerships with high schools is not feasible, colleges should still consider smaller-scale programs. For example, they might offer mini-courses or summer school for students. They could have students visit their campus as a class to see how a college works. Letting a student know what college entails could go a long way in easing fears and better preparing them for their college experience.

A key to attracting low-income students is information dissemination. Having little or no exposure to higher education, many students require even the most basic details about going to college: what to expect, how to apply. what to do once they have registered for classes. Students who do not receive enough information may find themselves unprepared to attend college, even if they want to.

Information about financial aid is also required. A national poll of 1,900 parents and college students showed that lower-income families, who most need information about financial aid, have the least knowledge about it.[13] Responding to this lack of information, schools and organizations across the country, including the Sallie Mae fund, are offering free information sessions.[14] Already, some CCCS colleges offer financial aid workshops. These programs should be modeled and expanded throughout the state as appropriate and necessary.

The need for more information is especially true at a time when more students are applying for aid,[15] yet less money is being allocated for that purpose. In Colorado, need-based aid will be

decreased due to the strained budget. With less money allotted for need-based aid and more competition for available dollars, the need for students and their families to receive information about financial aid and advice on how to apply for it increases.

For students who do not have an already established comfort with money issues, financial aid is not only complex, but also intimidating. In order to help these students plan financially for college, schools might offer classes in basic financial planning. This could include how to create a budget and money-saving tips. Other topics that students may find helpful are soft skills, such as time- and stress-management.

Another challenge for low-income students is transferring to a four-year school. According to a study by the California Postsecondary Education Commission, "student transfer programs at [California] community colleges are failing to send significant numbers of poor and minority students to the state's public universities."[16] The study found that most of the students who did transfer were Asians and non-Hispanic whites, whereas the transfer rates for Hispanics and blacks were much lower. Analysts believe that college staff needs to do a better job of mentoring minority students and pushing them to excel despite the hurdles they face in their pursuit of bachelor's degrees.[17] Efforts to encourage transfer to four-year institutions could include offering informational sessions on how to transfer, creating cohorts of students who plan to transfer, or "packaging" classes that a student should take if they wish to transfer.

Hispanic students

It is important to differentiate between the specific population of Hispanic students and the broader category of low-income students. While Hispanic students often fall into this category, this is not always the case. And, while they face many of the same barriers, they also have a unique set of circumstances, including cultural influences that do not affect other students.

Hispanic students are more likely to live with families than other students and to shoulder family responsibilities in addition to their schoolwork. They are also more likely to work more than 20 hours a week, with many working full-time.[18] This added burden, combined with a lack of preparation for higher education, drastically affects their graduation rate. In fact, the college graduation rate for Hispanics is the lowest among the major ethnic groups,[19] as is their college attendance rate.

As can be seen in the chart below, the percentage increase in associate degrees earned by Hispanics from 1980 to 2000 is five times the national average. This is due to their population growth as well as the increasing proportion of that population enrolling in college. Of those Hispanic students who go onto college, many choose two-year institutions. Numbers in Colorado follow this trend with CCCS serving a larger percentage of Hispanic students than Colorado's other public institutions.[20] Despite these gains, they are still underrepresented in higher education and the overall number of Hispanic students who chose to pursue higher education is lower than other races. CCCS should make efforts to recruit not only those that intend to go to college, but also those that do not plan to attend.

Number of degrees conferred by colleges and universities, by race/ethnicity and degree level: 1980-81, 1990-91, and 1999-2000

Degree type and year	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Non-resident alien
Associate							
1980-81	410,174	339,167	35,330	17,800	8,650	2,584	6,643
1990-91	462,030	376,081	37,657	24,251	13,725	3,672	6,644
1999-2000	564,933	408,508	60,181	51,541	27,764	6,494	10,445

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*, based on Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completion" surveys, various years.

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Many of the methods geared towards attracting low-income students will also attract Hispanic students. These include information dissemination, early engagement during high school and campus involvement. Trinidad State Junior College currently has its recruiters visit both students and their families to help ease the transition into college.[21] The entire family is then involved with the student's education and is more likely to encourage and support the student. They have also found that younger siblings then express interest in attending college. It may also help Hispanic students to have role models of Hispanic origin within the school who can understand their unique circumstances and culture.

In-state Tuition for Undocumented Students

Several states have considered or are considering legislation.

The following states have passed legislation: CA, IL, NY, OK, TX, UT, and WA.

In MD and WI, the governors vetoed such legislation.

Updated July 31, 2003

Another issue relating to some Hispanics is that of the undocumented student. Across the country, legislatures are considering bills to increase that population's participation in college. California already offers in-state tuition and is debating whether to provide basic financial aid for illegal residents.[22] In Colorado, HB03-1178 would have granted in-state tuition to students who attended high school in the state for a specified period of time regardless of their legal status. However, the House effectively killed this bill when it was assigned to the State Veterans and Military Affairs committee, where it was postponed indefinitely.[23]

Subsidized education for illegal residents is a highly charged political issue. Supporters note that education is usually considered a public good, providing benefits to society in addition to those the student receives. This theory, if correct, would apply to all residents in that society, legal or not. In 2002, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education decided to support, if asked, in-state tuition for the children of undocumented immigrants.[24] They cited the social benefits as well as the facts that many children of undocumented

immigrants have lived in Colorado since early childhood and have attended Colorado public schools for grades K-12, and their parents work and pay taxes in Colorado. While the nationwide debate continues, CCCS should be prepared for questions regarding its support of this issue.

Summary

Schools are facing increasing demands. This not only applies to the number of students in attendance, but also their diversity. First, there are the millennials who will increase the number of high school graduates attending college. Secondly, if marketed properly, the community colleges stand to attract growing numbers of Hispanic and lower-income students. With an increasingly diverse student population, increasingly diverse sets of student services are required. Schools will have to carefully analyze both the academic programs and the student services they offer.

To retain students, schools must be customer focused. In Iowa, the Board of Regents studied why students left their universities before the completion of their degree.[25] They found that the more the students were able to feel connected to the institutions, the more likely they were to persist. Merrow suggests that the key to student success is engaging them in campus activities.[26] Engagement will lead to 'deep learning', or learning for understanding. Vince Tinto, an expert on college retention, asserts that engagement occurs in the classroom as well. A system of peer mentoring within a particular class might be created to encourage student involvement and improve student performance. Engagement of students should begin during recruitment and continue through the students' time at the school.

Orientation is an ideal time to get students involved in the college community.[27] Schools should utilize this opportunity to familiarize students with what occurs both in and outside the classroom

and increase awareness of the services available to students. This may help students to feel a part of the campus community and encourage them to continue their education. Student engagement should be encouraged in all sectors of the student body, regardless of socio-economic background.

It has been argued that the relationship between students and their environment should be both reciprocal and dynamic.[28] Just as a student contributes to their school and their campus, the campus must contribute to the student. A diverse student population will demand different services. While one group may necessitate more services geared towards transfer, another may need mentoring to encourage them to stay in school. The school should be prepared to change, as its student population requires.

A key to fulfilling the needs of the students is the faculty. To best serve their students, schools need to ensure their faculty is able to provide the support desired by those students, which may include a particular course or student service. As it is the faculty with whom students have the most interaction, they are important in the retention and success of the students. Just as the diverse student population requires different services, it also requires different qualities and abilities in its faculty. Schools should examine the make-up of their faculty to ensure they are able to meet the needs of all students. New approaches to finding and hiring faculty with the desired skills and attributes may be needed. Also, professional development opportunities for faculty may be something for CCCS to explore.

Because of the variety of locations and populations served by the thirteen CCCS colleges, each college will have to analyze its unique circumstances. However, all schools should be certain that their vision and policies are customer focused. They should understand that student retention relies on factors other than offering desired courses. It may require services such as

transfer counseling or financial counseling and mentoring.

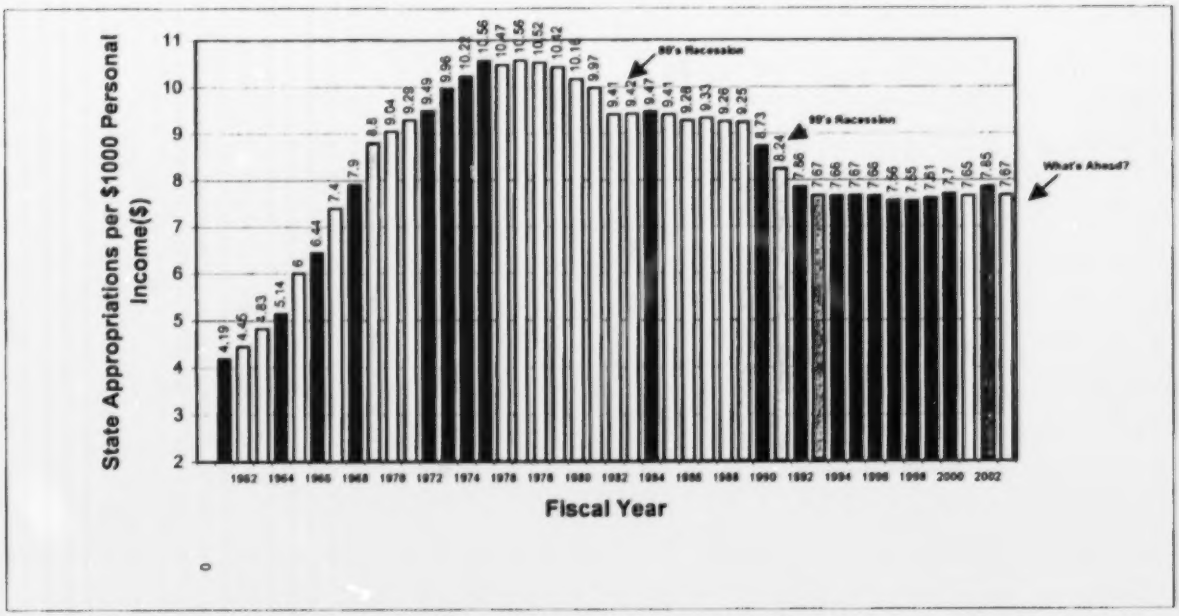
The Economic Factors

With the current recession, government funding of higher education has decreased. In response, some states are considering alternative funding structures for higher education, such as the stipends bill in Colorado. CCCS should also look to outside sources for additional funding. While positioning themselves to compete with other schools, they should look for means of collaboration with those schools. This might include sharing resources, reporting best practices, or collaborating to offer courses or programs. CCCS should also look to the business sector as a potential source of funding and support. Ultimately, creativity will be necessary to initiate new funding methods.

The Recession

The current economic situation in the United States has affected all sectors of our economy. In times of recession, funding of higher education typically decreases, as governors and legislators see higher education as the balance wheel of their budgets.[29]

This can be seen in the chart below, which shows aggregate state appropriations for higher education. Lower funding levels for higher education during difficult economic times is certainly true in Colorado where a large portion of the state's budget is "untouchable." This is due to laws such as Amendment 23, guaranteeing K-12 funding; federal matching dollars for Medicaid; and the demand for increased funding for the Department of Corrections. Regardless, it leaves a small portion of the budget that can actually be trimmed. Of the remaining categories, higher education is the largest, and therefore the biggest target.



Source: Postsecondary Education Opportunity – Number 115 – January 2002. The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education.

One option to alleviate the negative effects of reduced government funding is to examine the current state funding structure. A bill was introduced to the Washington legislature that would charge a higher tuition rate to students if they remained in school for too long.[30] The rationale was that with ever-declining resources, the state could no longer afford to cover the gap between in-state tuition and real education costs for students who lingered in school longer than necessary. The limits would be based on the percent of credits a student earns, not the time over which they attend school. Additional exceptions would be made for continuing education and those seeking double degrees.

This is reminiscent of recommendations by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Higher Education in Colorado. The Panel was created to examine the state's higher education system and make recommendations on how to improve its quality to make it nationally competitive. The Panel recommended a new system of funding higher education that would allocate money

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directly to students, rather than educational institutions. Eligible students would receive a stipend that they could use at state schools. Placing limits on the total stipend amount students are eligible to receive would discourage professional students.

By charging some students the higher tuition rate as recommended in Washington, and implied by the stipends bill in Colorado, schools might generate additional revenue if the base amount of their allocation is not affected. However, this is not likely as base funding would be eligible for cuts by the general assembly. Also, charging higher tuition might discourage life-long learning. Any legislation would have to be carefully worded so as to ensure students are able to continue their education as their life and career requires and that there is not a net decrease to college funding.

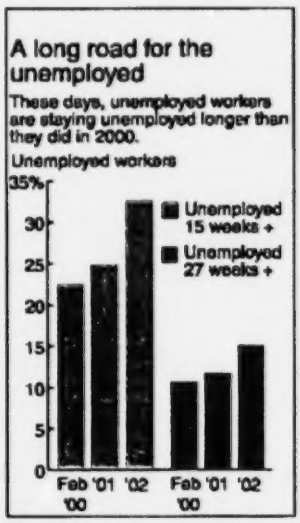
Some public colleges are looking at the restrictions imposed by receiving state funding and are seeking to free themselves from state control.[31] This is especially true as lawmakers and the public increasingly view higher education as a private rather than public good and increased governmental funding is not likely. In Colorado, the TABOR Amendment effectively limits the amount tuition can be raised. The caps placed on state revenue growth include tuition and therefore a large increase in tuition would limit growth in other areas of state revenue. Any amounts earned in excess of the growth limitations would have to be returned to the taxpayers. Colorado institutions could be freer from state control by being granted enterprise status. Under TABOR, enterprise status can be awarded to state agencies that receive less than 10% of their funding from general fund appropriations. During its 2003 session, the Colorado legislature passed a bill that would have made higher education eligible for this status. However, Governor Owens vetoed the bill.

According to recent reports, "even with gradual economic recovery, it is unlikely that higher

education will see significant improvements in funding."[32] This is attributed to three causes.[33] First, as the economy begins to recover, growth is expected to occur at a more balanced rate than that seen in the 1990s. Also, tax revenues will slow because of the government's inability to collect taxes on Internet transactions, which are becoming more prevalent. Finally, experts expect Medicaid spending to grow by 10 percent a year. These factors leave little funding to support higher education.

Over the 1990s, even though funding was increasing for higher education, it was a smaller portion of total state revenues. Now, as the amount of available funds is shrinking, higher education is receiving "a smaller share of a smaller pie." The outlook is not good for future funding of higher education. "If economic growth is slower than normal, if states continue to cut taxes, or if states increase spending in areas outside of higher education, then the outlook for support of public higher education will be even worse."[34] Schools will need to look to other sources of funding if they are to maintain high-quality services.

At the same time that general funds appropriated to colleges are declining, there is an increase in enrollment, as the recently unemployed look to community colleges to train them for the next step in their careers. CCCS has seen a surge in enrollment in the past year. This may be because, not only are more people unemployed, but they are unemployed for longer. (See graph)



Higher enrollment levels can provide additional revenue to the colleges. This also means additional costs due to higher demand for classes and the need, in some cases, for more faculty. The net effect of increased revenues and increased demand differs depending on the situation of an individual school. For schools with the infrastructure in

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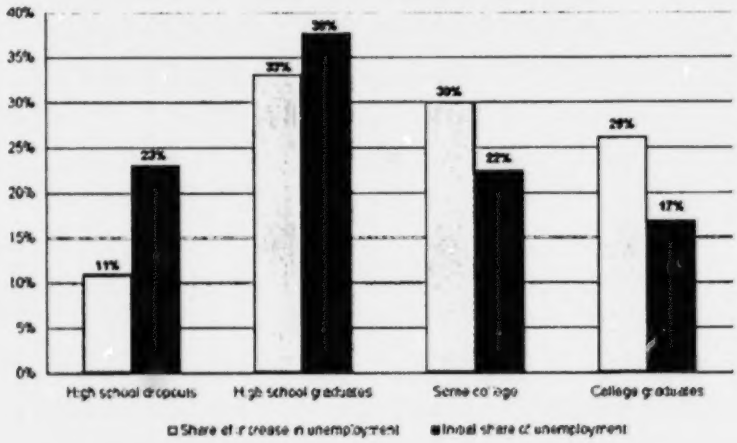
place to address the increased demand, higher enrollment means higher revenues. However, for schools that need to increase the amount of classes and faculty, the tuition revenues realized by higher enrollment might not offset the increased demands on their resources.

Competition

In addition to reduced general fund appropriations, community colleges are also facing competition from other schools. This includes public four-year, private and proprietary schools. Currently in the state of Colorado, in addition to the 13 CCCS community colleges, there are two local district community colleges, 10 public four-year colleges and universities, 19 accredited non-public higher education institutions.[35] There are also a plethora of private occupational schools.

One area of competition with public four-year institutions will be attracting students. Community colleges are too often seen as the first step for those students who are unable to get into a four-year school. They are also attractive to students who wish to save money and stay close to home. CCCS should proactively market the high quality academic experiences its schools offer. One point to stress should be that those with a college education are less likely to be unemployed, and less likely to become unemployed, than those with only a high school

Effect of recession on the composition of unemployment, by education level (October 2000 - Feburary 2002)



Source: Economic Policy Institute

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degree.

Competition with public four-year schools will also be for the limited financial resources the state has to offer. This leads to differences of opinion regarding tuition rates and it could mean different preferences for need-based versus merit-based financial aid. This will require continued marketing and lobbying for our interests in need-based aid as a priority over merit-based aid.[36]

Also competing for certain types of financial aid are private schools. Students at private institutions are eligible for many types of federal and state grants and loans. Even though Colorado's Joint Budget Committee recommended the elimination of financial aid appropriations for nonpublic institutions as a method to help balance the budget,[37] strong lobbying ensured this was not implemented. CCCS must be prepared for continued competition with both public and private schools for students and financial aid.

Increasingly, public two-year schools are facing competition from proprietary schools, which are for-profit institutions, such as the University of Phoenix, that offer a variety of degrees. Proprietary schools are continually increasing the number of degrees they offer and are able to be truly market driven and customer-focused. They are more flexible with their scheduling, more responsive to student needs, and better able to adjust their course offering to student demands.

However, a recent study by the Community College Research Center and the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement suggested "for-profits are not likely to become a major competitive threat to overall community college enrollments in the foreseeable future."[38] They found that for-profits were not making gains in the market share. In fact, the *increase* in community college enrollments in the mid- to late-1990s exceeded for-profits' *total enrollment* in

the two-year sector. The study also reported, "the for-profit experience has important lessons for community colleges, especially with respect to student services, program flexibility, the use of data for program improvement, curriculum development, and a focus on outcomes." The study found that decisions on issues from curriculum to instruction are made centrally at the for-profit institution studied. This is possible because the for-profit focused specifically on technical education, whereas community colleges offer a broader array of programs. Also, community colleges must operate within the public sector and therefore satisfy a larger number of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, government entities and taxpayers.

Collaboration

In addition to learning from proprietary schools, some community colleges have begun to look at how they might collaborate with these for-profit schools to provide a better education for their students. Collaboration with proprietary schools might include sharing a program or facilities, looking at economies of scale and sharing best practices. CCCS recently aligned with DeVry University in an agreement that allows seamless transfer of a CCCS associate degree into a DeVry University bachelor's degree program. These types of alliances aid both the schools and the students, providing greater access to higher education and enhancing career options.

With realizing a profit as one of their objectives, proprietary schools must be customer-focused. Their success as a company depends upon their ability to "sell" their product, which encourages them to tailor services to student needs and then to market those services to the students. The same above-mentioned study by the Community College Research Center and the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement found that the proprietary institutions studied had better integrated their student services. This could have important implications for community colleges. By learning from this model, CCCS could have better tools with which to market its schools. If a higher level of student services leads to a higher completion rate, then getting

students more involved in the campus and offering better services is imperative to the future success of CCCS.

Another potential partner is the business sector. Forms of collaboration may include financial sponsorships, providing internship, and in-kind services, such as collaborating on course offerings. Some institutions are even experimenting with selling advertising space on their websites.[39] While some schools may be wary of outright advertisements, listing a sponsor on the website as a benefit of their contribution is seen as acceptable. Regardless of the manner in which local business are engaged, CCCS and its schools should help businesses understand the benefits of collaboration with community colleges.

Summary

With the current and continuing economic circumstances, schools must be creative and consider alternative funding sources. This may include partnering with proprietary schools or creating partnerships with local businesses. CCCS should also continue its lobbying efforts, even at times when resources are not available, thereby positioning itself for the time when the economy improves.

Colleges would also do well to assist students in adjusting to and coping with the economic situation. They could help students by preparing them to work in a very competitive environment. One way to do this is by encouraging entrepreneurship. Across the nation, a growing number of colleges are offering courses and even degree programs in entrepreneurship, which are no longer limited to business schools.[40] Within CCCS, Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado Springs offers an entrepreneurial certificate program. CCCS should examine such innovative programs to determine if they are successful and, if so, they could be used as models for other schools in the system.

The key to weathering tough economic times is resourcefulness. CCCS should think creatively about funding sources, programs, and student services. Showing the initiative to do this may increase stakeholder confidence and encourage more funding in the future, whether public or private.

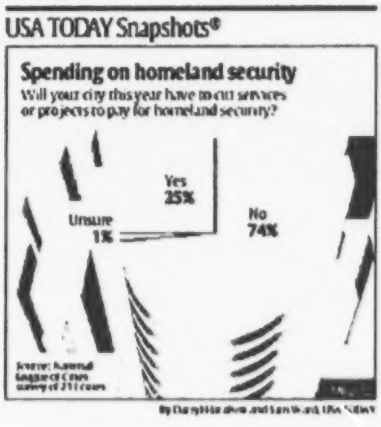
The Political Influences

Because it is a public agency, CCCS's stakeholders include government entities and taxpayers. Therefore, political trends, even those outside education, will affect CCCS operations. For example, Homeland Security, though not an educational issue, will potentially have both economic and demographic effects. A move toward academic curriculum and accountability at the K-12 level will also have serious implications for CCCS. These political issues will affect future curriculum, funding, planning and reporting.

Homeland Security

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 requires schools to report information on international students to aid the federal government in tracking student visas. First discussed after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the measure became a key feature of the government's response after 9/11.

Homeland security is a unique subject because it falls into multiple categories. While the issue itself is certainly political, the effect it has on community colleges is both demographic and financial. On the financial side, money will need to be appropriated for Homeland Security, meaning fewer resources for higher education, in the form of grants, for example. Also impacting college finances is the cost of the additional administrative functions imposed, as schools are required to track all international students. These new administrative functions will have to be funded out of currently strained budgets. Demographic effects may arise, as increased regulation on international students may discourage them from attending US institutions.



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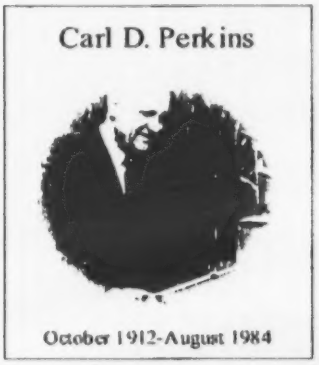
To report student information, schools enter data into the internet-based Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which was developed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The initial implementation of SEVIS has been fraught with problems and many schools have reported difficulty accessing the database and entering report data.[41] Regardless, after 9/11 it is unlikely the legislation requiring such reporting will be repealed. Instead, CCCS needs to establish policies and procedures on reporting data with the assumption that difficulties with the system will be fixed.

Having international students is beneficial to a college in many ways. While the foreign students gain the experience of American education, American students are exposed to other cultures and viewpoints. All students are better prepared to work in the continually globalized business sector and society in general. Another benefit, from a strictly monetary view, is that foreign students pay out-of-state tuition. However, with the increased regulation of foreign students, it is possible they may be discouraged from attending American institutions. To continue to attract and enroll international students, schools should offer services specifically geared toward foreign students. They should help prospective students through application process and assist them in maintaining their status as necessary. Schools should also do their best to provide a welcoming environment to foreign students, encouraging their participation in activities and interaction with other students.

Homeland Security will potentially affect several elements at community colleges. Reduced resources, additional administration requirements, and the recruitment and retention of international students must all be considered. By examining these factors, CCCS can be prepared to deal with the implications of Homeland Security, which is likely to be a long-term feature of US policy.

The Move Toward Academics

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act created the current format of career and technical education (CTE) in the United States. A new plan outlined by the Bush administration could mean a complete restructuring of CTE, shifting focus from traditional CTE to more academic-based courses. This shift in philosophy is a result of the administration's belief that career and technical education that trains students for specific jobs is not properly preparing them for a job market in which broader skills are required and people often change careers.[42]



CTE educators refute this idea. Many students have been drawn to CTE because they do not perform well in a traditional classroom setting. This does not mean however, that they are incapable of learning basic, or advanced, skills. Instead, it is their learning styles that differ from those of traditional students. CTE supporters believe that the occupational courses help students meet the requirements of academic standards by giving context to learning.

As outlined by the US Department of Education, the new Secondary and Technical Education program would replace the Perkins Act. It would shift the focus from providing traditional vocational education to supporting academic achievement at the high school level and providing high-quality technical education at the community college level, which would be coordinated with local high schools. In this way, the Bush proposal links higher education funding to its ability to form partnerships with local high schools.[43] The programs of study funded by the new structure would also be required to include "rigorous academic courses and technical courses leading to a post-secondary certificate, degree or registered apprenticeship...."

Under the Perkins Act, money is allocated to the states, which then appropriate the funds to CTE programs in both secondary and post-secondary institutions. With the new program, money would be given to states in the form of block grants and states would then have the discretion to allocate them as they see fit. The new regulations would require schools to show student achievement before they receive any federal grant money.[44]

The funding allocation for the new program is set at $1billion. This is a 23 percent reduction from the previous $1.286 billion allocation to fund the Perkins Act.[45] The American Association of Community Colleges calls this level of funding "grossly inadequate" and says the Administration "proposes doing more with less." Another concern is that other sources will begin to withdraw support. "Although the federal government contributes just seven percent of the nation's vocational education funds, advocates in the field fear cash-strapped states will back off their investment if the federal priority changes."[46] This is especially troubling because under the new program funds are not required to be used for vocational and technical education. The fear of many in the CTE arena is that the funds would be used to cover the costs involved in implementing and maintaining the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

NCLB is the Bush administration's attempt at improving K-12 education in the United States by stressing academic standards and accountability. NCLB has already received criticism from educators across the nation. "Officials are trying to figure out how they will pay for the standardized tests and other requirements."[47] Some states have passed resolutions urging full funding of federal mandates; other states are considering ignoring the law and forfeiting federal education funds. Montana's Republican governor Judy Martz is speaking out on behalf of rural schools and states that will be unable to meet mandate deadlines as currently set.[48] With limited resources at their disposal, the approaching deadlines are not feasible for smaller schools. Another concern is the requirement that "experienced" teachers be distributed evenly throughout districts.[49] This could mean districts are forced to move teachers against their wishes, negatively affecting morale. The largest concern is that NCLB expands the federal government's influence over public education.[50] This increased influence has the potential to expand into higher education as well.

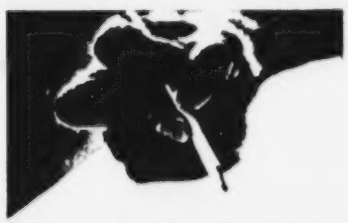
Community colleges will be affected by the combined forces of the restructuring of career and technical education and the effects of NCLB. Both of these plans encourage the improvement and support of *academic* programs and classes. If academic courses are considered superior at providing an education, then the limited resources available will be allocated to support them as opposed to career and technical courses. This would affect community colleges in a few ways. The first effect would be seen in the shifting focus of CTE. Funds formerly spent on CTE may be allocated to academic courses. Consequently, CCCS would either have to look for alternative sources of funding for its programs or shift its CTE courses to more academic courses.

Other effects on CCCS stem from the courses students take in high school. If secondary

students must have more academic courses instead of CTE courses, colleges would have to teach entry-level CTE skills previously learned in high school. Also, some educators fear that the new program will lead to more high school dropouts.[51] Schools are able to use CTE to retain some students who do not perform well in traditional academic classrooms. Gene Bottoms, senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board, noted that dropout rates have already risen in states that devalued vocational education programs over the last decade. Alternatively, if the Bush plan achieves its goals, with more students focusing on academic courses in high school, fewer basic skills courses in reading and math may be needed at the college level.

Accountability

With the passage of NCLB, Congress and the president have given federal direction to an era of educational accountability.[52] At the state level, this trend was well underway before NCLB, with many states implementing academic standards in the late 1990s. The number of states with academic standards in core subjects in 1996 was 14 - the number in 1999 was 49.[53] However, academic standards are only one facet of accountability. For accountability to be meaningful, there need to be measurable variables that can then be compared and contrasted. Therefore, emphasis is placed on quantitative rather than qualitative performance measures.



Under NCLB, each state is to implement standardized testing, such as the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), to determine the performance of its schools. It is much easier to compare students' scores on a math exam than it is to compare portfolios of artwork. Under the accountability structure set out by NCLB, traditional academic courses, such as math and science, are preferred over more qualitative courses. If a school is judged based on how its students perform on these tests, there will be pressure for the teachers

and administrators to ensure their students do well. This could mean emphasis is placed on the subject matters tested, such as reading and math skills, over more job-focused courses typical to CTE. This is seen even in the new Secondary and Technical Education program, which requires "rigorous academic courses."

A desire for accountability has led to a trend of high stakes testing in primary and secondary education. Already moves towards more accountability in higher education can be seen. In a study by the National Education Association, legislators from across the nation recognized the funding issues faced by higher education. In response to this, they advocated for increased decentralization carefully balanced with greater accountability and efficiency around state priorities.[54] The issue of accountability also arose in Texas when the state examined deregulating tuition and students protested, expressing concern about the accountability of the Board of Regents.[55]

In Colorado, a form of accountability already exists in the Quality Indicator System (QIS), which measures various performance factors, including graduation and retention rates, success of minority students, CTE graduate employment rates, institutional support/administrative expenditures, undergraduate class size, and faculty instructional workload. Overseen by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, the QIS is used to determine performance funding for higher education in Colorado. However, QIS focuses primarily on academic-related issues and does not necessarily speak to the multi-faceted mission of the community college. CCCS may wish to determine what factors are important to its internal and external stakeholders and highlight the success of those. This is especially important in the broader picture of marketing to the student population and potential business partners, who might be interested in different facts than the state government.

In February, the Illinois Board of Higher Education approved a resolution requiring all public universities and some private schools to measure "what students know and are able to do" during and at the end of their college careers.[56] The board chairman stressed that the assessment methods, which are to be established by fall 2004, are not just quantitative measures, but qualitative as well. However, many educators worry about the feasibility of such a system.

Even as the use of testing grows, researchers are debating the effects of testing on learning. Arizona State University researchers reported "efforts in more than half the states to tie serious consequences to student test scores were producing few transferable academic gains." However, Stanford researchers concluded that state programs that put strong pressure on students and schools to raise test scores might be more helpful than harmful.[57] As the debate continues on the academic contribution of high-stakes testing, colleges should prepare for similar tests in the future.

Summary

As a public agency, CCCS will always be affected by political trends. In cases such as Homeland Security, the trend itself may be political, but the effects may be economic or demographic. To prepare for the implications of the Homeland Security Act, CCCS and its schools should work out systems of reporting data. Schools may wish to alter their application and registration processes to collect the information needed about foreign students. Schools should also plan to market to foreign students in the event that they are discouraged from applying to US schools.

When looking at political trends, watching K-12 education is a good way to gage what will occur

in higher education. The move toward more federal involvement in and influence over education will soon affect community colleges. Also affecting community colleges will be the move toward accountability. The public will want to see higher participation rates as well as higher graduation rates. To achieve this, CCCS should focus on recruitment and retention efforts. (See Demographic Elements above.)

Conclusions and Recommendations

CCCS provides a vast array of services and programs to a diverse student population. Due to its nature, the System is affected by a variety of trends and issues.

Demographically, it must be prepared for the millennials who will soon come to higher education in record numbers. CCCS schools must also market themselves to low-income and Hispanic students, carefully examining the services they offer so as to attract and retain these students.

To prepare for the incoming student body CCCS and its colleges should:

- Offer courses in both basic and advanced skills.
- Package programs of higher-level courses as "transfer" programs, targeting students who wish to get a four-year degree.
- Examine their current facilities and determine if they have enough classroom space for increased demand.
- If not, they should look into medium-term fixes for this issue. Perhaps they could rent space at a nearby business facility or high school. The currently soft real estate market will enable them to secure lower rental rates.
- Partner with high schools to attract students of all abilities to higher education.
- Examine their student services. According to student demand, schools might need transfer counseling, mentoring to encourage retention, financial aid counseling, basic skills counseling. The life skills, such as balancing your checkbook or time-management, do not need to be full courses, but easily accessed seminars for students to participate in as they choose.
- Disseminate information about services to both current and prospective students.
- Continue to support in-state tuition for children of undocumented immigrants.

Schools could look to business to provide partnership or sponsorship for these programs. With the current economic situation, additional state resources for these programs are unlikely. Most businesses are also suffering from the economy's downturn. However, local businesses would

have the opportunity to get involved and engage students in a variety of ways, such as:

- Providing mentors for students with a specific interest in their industry.
- Providing internship opportunities, with or without pay.
- Hosting classes at their place of business to expose students to post-college opportunities (they should stress the importance of an education and not suggest students could work there without their degree).
- Sponsoring informational seminars. For example, a bank may host a session on creating a household budget.

After the boom of the 1990s, the economy is now in a severe recession. With declining revenues, the state has less general fund money to allocate to its agencies and departments, including higher education. In fact, higher education typically fairs worse than do other sectors during difficult economic times. It has also been predicted that even once the economy begins to recover, higher education will not see comparable increases to their funding.

To adjust to these factors community colleges should:

- Look to business for partnerships (see above).
- Expand on existing fundraising efforts through their Foundations.
- Examine cost-cutting measures put in place during the past two years and determine what measures can be permanent.
- Continue to lobby for need-based financial aid for students.
- Partner with other local and regional CCCS colleges and other public institutions.
- Study the best practices of proprietary schools and adopt any appropriate programs, policies, or procedures.
- Partner with proprietary schools where feasible.

On the political front, many changes are occurring that will affect community colleges. Among these are Homeland Security issues, the changes to the Perkins Act for Vocational and

Technical education, the policies of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the move towards accountability. In the coming years, colleges may see decreased funding for CTE, a move toward academic courses and a higher demand for accountability in exchange for public funds.

Colleges should:

- Examine other sources of funding for CTE, such as business partnerships.
- Look at current CTE partnerships with high schools to determine if they meet new federal standards. This would enable schools to determine the likelihood of continued funding.
- Lobby for support of CTE as a method of teaching academic skills in a non-traditional context.
- Watch the progress of NCLB and see if requirements and deadlines are softened.
- Attempt to preempt a move towards testing by providing their own accountability measures.
- Create services geared toward recruiting and retaining foreign students, who may be deterred from applying due to increased regulations.

Overall, community colleges are looking at a time when they will be asked to do more with less. The key is to look for funding opportunities that will allow them to provide services for the wide variety of students they serve. CCCS should continue to support those issues it finds important, including need-based aid and aid for children of undocumented immigrants. Ultimately, all actions taken should be done with the student in mind. CCCS should stay focused on the populations they serve and make decisions in the best interest of the students.

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